HE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWS LETTER

VOLUME II
NUMBER 1

WINTER, 1955

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OUR HERITAGE IS AT STAKE

By Bruce Catton

Our heritage as Americans, to begin with, is composed of just about everything we as Americans have done or said or dreamed since we first began to occupy this land. It is the story of people — people being and doing and becoming. It is not always the story of famous people; back of the great heroes of American history there are the millions of ordinary folk who made it possible for the great men to ascend into legend. As Abraham Lincoln remarked on the battlefield of Gettysburg, after all of the speeches and fine words have been forgotten the world will go on remembering what men did there; and it is that question — what did men do there? — that lies at the bottom of this attempt to explore our American past.

But when it is granted that all of this adds up to an absorbing story, other questions remain: Is this just a diversion, a bit of dressed-up escape literature? Are we simply trying to take our minds off our troubles by looking back into a day that seems to have been simpler and happier than the present?

A little escape is needed. Yet the real problem that faces all of us these days is *not how to escape* from the world crisis but *how to meet it*. We have acquired a dangerous and explosive body of knowledge in recent years — we know how to blow the whole physical world to fragments, and if we get too clumsy in our use of that knowledge we might some day actually do it. Worse yet, the same knowledge seems to have passed to the Visigoths, with their blind drive to go rootless and faithless into the future, and if they can manage it they will try to bring our story to a full stop.

And it is precisely because the present is so difficult and the future so uncertain that a detailed understanding of the American past is vitally important. For from that past we Americans have drawn, along with much else, the faith that we live by. That faith is built on the implicit conviction that there is something undefeatable in human beings — something that shapes soaring dreams in spite of doubt and discouragement until at last some essential part of it turns out to be real.

It is also a faith in history as a continuous process, something that goes on into the future as well as back in the past. We are a fairly skeptical folk, but the one thing we cannot doubt is our own destiny. Americans have been a great many things, but they have never yet been nihilists. Always they believe in the future, because their own past indicates that these people have from the first been up to something that is not going to die.

This is a good time to reach back into the American past, to touch the courage and the endurance and the eternal striving that have been at the heart of the American story. The story of the American people should be told partly because it is the most interesting story we know about and partly because when you read it you touch something unbreakable, deep down in the people themselves.

(The World-Telegram and Sun, December 1, 1954, by permission)

THE ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Society was held at the Old South Church, Boston, November 10th, with seventy-seven persons from eleven states present. The luncheon in honor of Prof. Perry Miller was noteworthy (his address is published in The Bulletin of the Congregational Library, 14 Beacon St., Boston — copies available on request).

The business session followed with reports, discussions and election of officers (see page 4). Copies of the minutes and Secretary's report sent free on request.

FOREFATHERS' DAY

Reports from the churches across the country of the observance of Forefathers' Day, November 21, indicate widespread celebration. *Advance*, The Calendar Service, State papers and the public press gave splendid support. Churches are requested to plan now for the 1955 celebration Sunday, November 20. Material will be sent pastors in due season.

MERGER PAPERS

The Society has been requested to collect copies of all printed material relating to the proposed merger with the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Will all persons or organizations issuing material relating to this topic, from whatever point of view, kindly send two copies to the office of the Society. We desire to compile a file for use of future students.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Spring number of the News Letter will be in the interest of local church historians and their work. Twenty-six new names have been added to our growing list. Additional names desired.

CORRECTION

Dr. Bradford, in his piece on Gov. Bradford, in the Fall number was made to say that the Governor was born in 1509! The correct date, as several correspondents noted, is 1590. Our apologies.

FOR THE PERMANENT RECORD

Churches observing an anniversary are urged to send *Advance* a brief note listing the name of church, date of celebration, and the main speakers and topics. Dr. McCracken has opened a column for such listing. When so listed the information becomes part of our permanent record. "Brevity is the soul of wit."

BOOKS, INFORMATION WANTED

Dexter's Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years.

Wise — A Vindication of the Government of New England Churches.

Minutes of National Council of 1865 and from 1871 to 1901.

Walker — The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism.

Hood — The National Council of Congregational Churches.

Edward W. Ohrenstein, Winslow, Wash., Chairman Library Committee, Washington State Conference, is seeking books on Congregational and Christian Church history for State Conference Library. Transportation paid.

A. J. Hanna, Vice President and Chairma
mond Jubilee Commission of Rollins College,
Park, Fla., desires information and historical m
in preparation for the Diamond Jubilee of the C

AN OPEN LETTER TO PROGRAM CHAIRMEN

May I commend to your consideration a la
velopment of Conference and Association H
ships in Congregationalism until they come
regularly scheduled events on the programs o
ference and Association meetings. As we ap
important anniversaries the people of our ch
are interested to learn more of their past.

Lectures in Congregationalism might well
valuable service in explaining Congregationa
themselves and thus better equip them to par
in the development of the Ecumenical Churc
the best treasures of their past.

Arvel M. Steece, Minnesota Histor

NEW ENGLAND BEGINNINGS

Some of the early New England leaders d
of establishing a church whose teachings, forn
ceremonies would be carried back to Engla
there be accepted in place of Anglicanism or
terianism.

But Perry Miller writes: "The Puritans c
Massachusetts Bay not so much to found the
as to execute a flank attack on the Anglica
archy."

On the other hand, John Fiske wrote: "The
that they came to New England for the pur
establishing religious liberty, in any sense in
we understand such a phrase, is entirely incorre
there is nothing they would have regarded wit
genuine abhorrence . . . but the religious lib
enjoy today is largely the consequence of the
but a consequence that was unforeseen."

NEW STATE CONFERENCE HISTOR

Dr. Robert G. Armstrong, for many years
intendent of the N. H. Conference and recentl
of the historical old church at Lebanon, Co
been appointed Conference Historian of th
necticut Conference. In addition to the regul
in the Conference office he will be assembl
terial for a comprehensive history of Congre
Connecticut, bringing up to date the "C
tions to the Ecclesiastical History of Conne
which was issued in 1861 to commemorate t
pletion of one hundred fifty years. Persons
records, letters or other information that will
ful in this undertaking, are requested to send
Dr. R. G. Armstrong, 125 Sherman St., Ha
Conn.

THE PILGRIM WAY

Congregationalism is a flexible and adapta
of church life. Congregationalists are by histo
and temper of mind pilgrim people. The
fathers actually went somewhere. What ga
their vast significance in the drama was the
We sometimes want the Pilgrim heritage
the Pilgrim pilgrimage. You cannot defend a
age; you either make it or stay where you are.

Truman B. Dou

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH—PIONEER

By Lucy M. Eldredge

e early Conferences of the Christian Church so wary of ecclesiastical domination that they d their Conference records lest anyone should em to limit the freedom of action of any church ture conference. Available documents, however, that the early leaders of the Church had a geous spirit and pioneered in the following areas:

he Christian Church Was America's First digenous Church

e Church was formed by three distinct groups ating after the Revolution in different sections e country and "flowed together without even a o unite." One group came from the Methodists orth Carolina; the second from the Baptists in England, and the third from the Presbyterians ntucky. The first proposal to unite was made in . The first United General Conference was held indham, Conn., 1820.

he First Religious Newspaper in the World

e *Herald of Gospel Liberty* (first issued Septem-, 1808) grew out of the desire of the leaders lp people to understand the meaning of religious y. This paper greatly aided in uniting the groups ad wide influence outside the fellowship. It has continuous existence for nearly 150 years. In it was united with *The Congregationalist* and it is continued through *Advance*, as stated in issue of that paper.

oneering for Women

early as 1812 women preachers were "working highly esteemed among the Christians." This d to give women equal standing with men in all h work. Their first woman preacher, Melissa ll, was ordained March 7, 1867, at Ebenezer ch, Clark County, Ohio. Mrs. Terrell was among rst, if not the first woman, to be ordained and the full rights of the Christian ministry by any nination by direct authority of a conference at equest of a local church.

e Christian Church also pioneered in the field llege co-education. When Antioch College, w Springs, Ohio, was opened in 1853 with ce Mann as president, it was voted that this e would admit students of both sexes on equal tions and to equal privileges, with no distinc- whatsoever regarding courses or degrees.

he First Denomination to Reunite After The ar Between the States

e separation came over the issue of slavery, in the reunion at Marion, Indiana, in 1890.

ristian Education Leadership

nutes of the General Convention of 1834 stated "we believe all feel the importance of some natical cooperation on this subject" (educa- In 1840 it was recorded: "We are in favor horough theological education of our ministers" and the third Society of Christian Endeavor was organized in the Rockland Christian Church, Scituate, Rhode Island, thus making the Society interdenominational. In October 1922, the Convention united its Education, Sunday School, and Christian Endeavor Boards into one Board of Christian Education to cooperate with the Christian Publishing Association to direct a program of Christian Education "reaching from our homes through our churches, schools, and colleges," and was among the first if not the first to unify its total educational program.

6. *Pioneering in Ideas*

(a) Christian Union

"The spirit of Christian Union among us is as old as our denominational existence. It was formed when our pioneer fathers separated themselves from the sects, and took an independent stand. . . . Union will never come merely by negotiations. Only when souls are filled with the love of Christ, when the magnitude of the gospel is seen to tower above the paltry interests of sect, is there a hopeful chance for true Christian Union. . . . To fight against it is to fight against God." Dr. J. B. Weston. (1898)

(b) Christian Missions

"By scientific discovery and appliances the world is almost daily being made smaller. The nations of the earth are brought closer to us. . . . Let some of the best thought of our wisest men and women be given to devising ways and means whereby the missionary work of the church may be enlarged; for the work we do for missions is the highest expression of our Christian and denominational life. . . . The words, Home and Foreign, where used in relation to missionary work should be dropped."

Dr. J. G. Bishop. (1898)

(c) Christian Democracy

"We do not anticipate any division or contention, and hope all who come will have the good of the cause at heart. If we have different opinions, relative to the best means of promoting the general interest, we will in candor and faithfulness express our views to each other — then quietly submit to the wishes of the body at large. Let us all be determined to act in unison. . . . The people will be united if the ministers agree. We will meet in union and part in love and peace." Joseph Badger. (1834)

(d) Christian Belief

"Mr. President, your Committee on Doctrines beg leave to report unanimously the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as found in this inspired book." With these words, Moses Kidder held high a pulpit Bible as the report of the special committee. Approval of the report was unanimous. "The few who were disappointed were perfectly subdued."

American Christian Convention,
Marion, Indiana, 1850.

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The Purpose *of the Congregational Christian Historical Society is to cultivate a deeper interest in the history of the Congregational Christian Churches in all its aspects, and a greater awareness of the importance of Congregational Christian recorded history as a source of information and of inspiration, and as a basis for future action.*

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Receipts for the year 1954	$5,819.85
Expenses for the year 1954	5,672.34
Net for the year	$ 147.51
Budget for 1955	$6,250.00

Contributors for 1954:

	Renewals	*New*
Individuals	17	71
Churches	90	60
Conferences	27	1
National Agencies	3	
Seminaries	1	3

To do the work pressing to be done the Society annually 100 more gifts from contributing indi and 50 more gifts from contributing churches.

Sustaining membership for individuals is, mi $5.00 per year, and for churches, minimum, per year.

P. DONALD FOLWELL
Chairman, Finance Committee

JOHN A. H
Treasurer

AN INVITATION

If you wish to have a sense of comradeship w men and women who through the years have us some of our best ideas and whose labors a rifices have helped to insure a measure of re freedom and spiritual development, you are to become a member of this Society. By so do dividuals and churches will enter a growing fell of Congregational Christians, who in the pas enced the life of their times in many importan and with those who seek to make that in formative in these days.

The support of this Society and the expansio work rests with those who have its future at h

HELEN KENYON, *Vice Pres. for Public Re*

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